

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE FORM PTO-1390 (Modified) (REV 11-2000)		ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER D-43368-01
TRANSMITTAL LETTER TO THE UNITED STATES DESIGNATED/ELECTED OFFICE (DO/EO/US) CONCERNING A FILING UNDER 35 U.S.C. 371		U.S. APPLICATION NO. (IF KNOWN, SEE 37 CFR 1.5) 10/070771
INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO. PCT/AU00/01062	INTERNATIONAL FILING DATE 7 September 2000	PRIORITY DATE CLAIMED 7 September 2000
TITLE OF INVENTION METHOD FOR PACKAGING AND PACKAGING APPARATUS		
APPLICANT(S) FOR DO/EO/US Stevens, David J., 97 Station Street, Port Melbourne, Victoria 3207, Australia		
Applicant herewith submits to the United States Designated/Elected Office (DO/EO/US) the following items and other information:		
<p>1. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This is a FIRST submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.</p> <p>2. <input type="checkbox"/> This is a SECOND or SUBSEQUENT submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.</p> <p>3. <input type="checkbox"/> This is an express request to begin national examination procedures (35 U.S.C. 371(f)). The submission must include items (5), (6), (9) and (24) indicated below.</p> <p>4. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The US has been elected by the expiration of 19 months from the priority date (Article 31).</p> <p>5. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A copy of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371 (c) (2))</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> is attached hereto (required only if not communicated by the International Bureau). b. <input type="checkbox"/> has been communicated by the International Bureau. c. <input type="checkbox"/> is not required, as the application was filed in the United States Receiving Office (RO/US). <p>6. <input type="checkbox"/> An English language translation of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2))</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <input type="checkbox"/> is attached hereto. b. <input type="checkbox"/> has been previously submitted under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4). <p>7. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amendments to the claims of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371 (c)(3))</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <input type="checkbox"/> are attached hereto (required only if not communicated by the International Bureau). b. <input type="checkbox"/> have been communicated by the International Bureau. c. <input type="checkbox"/> have not been made; however, the time limit for making such amendments has NOT expired. d. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> have not been made and will not be made. <p>8. <input type="checkbox"/> An English language translation of the amendments to the claims under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)).</p> <p>9. <input type="checkbox"/> An oath or declaration of the inventor(s) (35 U.S.C. 371 (c)(4)).</p> <p>10. <input type="checkbox"/> An English language translation of the annexes to the International Preliminary Examination Report under PCT Article 36 (35 U.S.C. 371 (c)(5)).</p> <p>11. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A copy of the International Preliminary Examination Report (PCT/IPEA/409).</p> <p>12. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A copy of the International Search Report (PCT/ISA/210).</p>		
Items 13 to 20 below concern document(s) or information included:		
<p>13. <input type="checkbox"/> An Information Disclosure Statement under 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98.</p> <p>14. <input type="checkbox"/> An assignment document for recording. A separate cover sheet in compliance with 37 CFR 3.28 and 3.31 is included.</p> <p>15. <input type="checkbox"/> A FIRST preliminary amendment.</p> <p>16. <input type="checkbox"/> A SECOND or SUBSEQUENT preliminary amendment.</p> <p>17. <input type="checkbox"/> A substitute specification.</p> <p>18. <input type="checkbox"/> A change of power of attorney and/or address letter.</p> <p>19. <input type="checkbox"/> A computer-readable form of the sequence listing in accordance with PCT Rule 13ter.2 and 35 U.S.C. 1.821 - 1.825.</p> <p>20. <input type="checkbox"/> A second copy of the published international application under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4).</p> <p>21. <input type="checkbox"/> A second copy of the English language translation of the international application under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4).</p> <p>22. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certificate of Mailing by Express Mail</p> <p>23. <input type="checkbox"/> Other items or information:</p>		

U.S. APPLICATION NO. (IF KNOWN, SEE 37 CFR 1.5) 10/070771		INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO. PCT/AU00/01062		ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER D-43368-01		
24. The following fees are submitted::		CALCULATIONS PTO USE ONLY				
BASIC NATIONAL FEE (37 CFR 1.492 (a) (1) - (5)) :						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neither international preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) nor international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO and International Search Report not prepared by the EPO or JPO <input type="checkbox"/> International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but International Search Report prepared by the EPO or JPO <input type="checkbox"/> International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO <input type="checkbox"/> International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) paid to USPTO but all claims did not satisfy provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4) <input type="checkbox"/> International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) paid to USPTO and all claims satisfied provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4)		\$1040.00 \$890.00 \$740.00 \$710.00 \$100.00 \$1,040.00				
ENTER APPROPRIATE BASIC FEE AMOUNT =		\$1,040.00				
Surcharge of \$130.00 for furnishing the oath or declaration later than months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492 (e)).		<input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 \$0.00				
CLAIMS		NUMBER FILED	NUMBER EXTRA	RATE		
Total claims		15 - 20 =	0	x \$18.00 \$0.00		
Independent claims		2 - 3 =	0	x \$84.00 \$0.00		
Multiple Dependent Claims (check if applicable).		<input type="checkbox"/> \$0.00				
TOTAL OF ABOVE CALCULATIONS		= \$1,040.00				
<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant claims small entity status. See 37 CFR 1.27). The fees indicated above are reduced by 1/2.		\$0.00				
SUBTOTAL		= \$1,040.00				
Processing fee of \$130.00 for furnishing the English translation later than months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492 (f)).		<input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 + \$0.00				
TOTAL NATIONAL FEE		= \$1,040.00				
Fee for recording the enclosed assignment (37 CFR 1.21(h)). The assignment must be accompanied by an appropriate cover sheet (37 CFR 3.28, 3.31) (check if applicable).		<input type="checkbox"/> \$0.00				
TOTAL FEES ENCLOSED		= \$1,040.00				
				Amount to be:	\$	
				refunded	\$	
				charged	\$	
<p>a. <input type="checkbox"/> A check in the amount of _____ to cover the above fees is enclosed.</p> <p>b. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Please charge my Deposit Account No. 07-1765 in the amount of \$1,040.00 to cover the above fees. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.</p> <p>c. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 07-1765. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.</p> <p>d. <input type="checkbox"/> Fees are to be charged to a credit card. WARNING: Information on this form may become public. Credit card information should not be included on this form. Provide credit card information and authorization on PTO-2038.</p>						
<p>NOTE: Where an appropriate time limit under 37 CFR 1.494 or 1.495 has not been met, a petition to revive (37 CFR 1.137(a) or (b)) must be filed and granted to restore the application to pending status.</p>						
<p>SEND ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; width: 100%; height: 100px; margin-bottom: 10px;"></div> <p>Mark B. Quatt Cryovac, Inc. Sealed Air Corp. Post Office Box 464 Duncan, SC 29334</p>						
 SIGNATURE						
<p>Mark B. Quatt</p> <hr/> <p>NAME</p> <hr/> <p>30,484</p> <hr/> <p>REGISTRATION NUMBER</p> <hr/> <p>March 6, 2002</p> <hr/> <p>DATE</p>						

Express Mail #ET929255114US
PAPERS A/XD/2334388.PCT - 7/9/00

100070771

JC10 Rec'd PCT/PTO 06 MAR 2002

6/PNTS - 1 -

METHOD FOR PACKAGING AND PACKAGING APPARATUS

The present invention relates to a method for packaging and a packaging apparatus for the packaging of, for example, food such as meat products. In particular, the invention 5 relates to a method of packaging and an apparatus which utilize a feed of packaging material in tubing form which is slit and unfolded to be formed around a fed product.

Methods and apparatus for the packaging of products, for example, food and in particular meat products, are broad ranging, various techniques being employed depending on the product which is to be packaged and the packaging material which is being used. 10 Generally, conventional form, fill and seal packaging machines and processes involve the supply of packaging material in continuous sheet form, commonly referred to as single wound material. The sheet material is supplied having a width as required for the wrapping process in question. Generally, the width of the sheet material is up to about 700 mm. The sheet material may be produced in various ways including using extrusion techniques, or via the 15 production of a tube of the material which is subsequently collapsed and slit to provide two flat sheets. These two methods have been traditionally used to supply sheet material for use in conventional form, fill and seal packaging practices.

The use of some types of plastic packaging materials may be somewhat limited when produced by conventional production methods due to limitations in the maximum possible 20 widths of the flat sheets produced using these methods. In particular, materials which are necessarily extruded and blown into a vertical bubble to induce shrink characteristics generally suffer from pore bubble stability. That is, when the material in a semi-molten phase is inflated to a wider tube before the plastic sets, if the bubble is not stable due to the plastic properties and size of the bubble, then it may collapse ceasing production of the 25 packaging material. Furthermore, and related to this, the accuracy and tolerances of the final packaging materials produced may be greatly affected using conventional production methods for flat sheet materials. More particularly, conventional processes of edge slitting the material to form two continuous flat sheets from a tube will produce flat sheets with variable width, the edges of which deviate quite markedly from a straight line.

30 The present invention advantageously provides a means for alleviating problems

related to variation in width of a single wound packaging material. The invention also advantageously provides a method and apparatus which may be economically viable in reducing production costs for the packaging material being used, and allows packaging materials to be run at widths which are not conventionally available. Still further, the 5 invention advantageously provides a method and apparatus which may substantially avoid contamination of the product-contact surface of the packaging material prior to and during packaging of the product.

According to the present invention there is provided a method for packaging comprising the steps of:

- 10 (i) continuously feeding a packaging material as tubing from a supply;
- (ii) slitting and unfolding the tubing to form a flat web of the packaging material;
- (iii) forming the flat web of packaging material around a fed product and longitudinally sealing the packaging material formed around the product; and
- 15 (iv) cutting and sealing the packaging material at one or both ends of the product.

The fed product is, in accordance with conventional methods, generally fed as individual, spaced units of product, the flat web of packaging material being formed around each of the units. Subsequently, in step (iv) the packaging material which is formed and 20 sealed around the product is cut at a location between units of product and sealed at one or both ends of the unit. In some instances it will be preferable that the packaging material be sealed at only one end so that the product is left in an open-ended bag. This will enable, if necessary, the subsequent vacuum sealing of the product in the bag. As such, in a particular embodiment, in step (iv) the packaging material is cut and sealed at one end of the product 25 and the packaged product is subsequently vacuum sealed.

The method according to the invention utilizes a feed of packaging material in the form of tubing. This is quite different from the conventional form, fill and seal techniques which involve the supply of a flat single wound sheet of material which generally has been produced by edge slitting of a tube of material to form two flat sheets. In accordance with 30 the method of the invention, as the packaging material is fed in tubing form and then slit and

opened out, it will be recognised that the width of the opened tubing, that is the flat web referred to in step (ii), will be twice that of conventionally used single wound material when that material has been produced by slitting of a tube to form two flat sheets. As such, according to the invention, if tubing is supplied having a double web width of up to about 550 mm, then the flat web formed by slitting and unfolding of the tubing will have a width of up to about 1100 mm. Such widths have generally been unavailable to date and, as will be recognised by those in the art, provide substantial advantages in the packaging of larger products.

The feeding of the packaging material in tubing form also removes costs related to the 10 post-production conversion of conventional materials to flat continuous sheeting, for example, the edge slitting of a tube to form two flat sheets described above. The supply of tubing also means that the packaging material is not opened to the air prior to the slitting and unfolding of the tubing in step (ii) of the method. This fact substantially decreases the chance of contamination to the inner surface of the film which will form the inside or product-contacting 15 surface of the packaging material.

In order to minimise variation in width of the flat web formed in step (ii), in a preferred embodiment during feeding of the tubing, the tubing is tracked to ensure that it is substantially centrally slit along its length. More particularly, the tubing is advantageously centrally slit along its upper or lower surfaces as illustrated in Diagram 2.2, although it may 20 be possible to slit the tubing material along one of its edges to form the flat web as illustrated in Diagram 2.1.

After the slitting and unfolding of the tubing to form the flat web, the flat web of packaging material is formed around the product which is to be packaged and is longitudinally sealed to substantially reform the tubing originally fed from the supply. Due to the deviation 25 in width of the flat web, on longitudinal sealing to reform the tubing, it will be recognised that there will be at least some excess packaging material along the longitudinal seal. Therefore, in a preferred embodiment, prior to or during the longitudinal sealing of the packaging material in step (iii), the packaging material is trimmed along its slit edges formed in step (ii) to remove excess packaging material therefrom. This trimming of the edge of the 30 film is completed by a knife or shearing apparatus. The trimming function allows control of

the amount of excess material outside the longitudinal seal as illustrated in Diagram 3.1.

The cutting and sealing of the packaging material in step (iv), as discussed above, may include cutting and sealing at one end of the product and cutting and optionally sealing at the other end of the product depending on whether vacuum sealing of the packaged product is 5 desirable. The cutting and sealing may be conducted by any suitable method, such as using conventional hot or cold sealing systems. According to one embodiment, the cutting and sealing of the packaging material is carried out by impulse sealing the packaging material at the end or ends of the product.

Vacuum packaging of the product would commonly involve evacuating the bag 10 through the open end then sealing. The final package would contain no gas sealed inside with the packaged item. This could be completed by a vacuum nozzle or a vacuum chamber system. The final seal could be in the form of a clip or heat seal weld.

According to another aspect of the invention there is provided a packaging apparatus comprising:

15 means for receiving packaging material continuously fed as tubing from a supply, and slitting and unfolding the tubing to form a flat web of the packaging material;

calendering means for receiving the flat web and tensioning the flat web;

forming means for receiving the tensioned flat web and forming the flat web around a fed product;

20 sealing means for longitudinally sealing the packaging material formed around the product; and

end sealing means for cutting and sealing the packaging material at one or both ends of the product.

The slitting and unfolding means receives the continuous feed of packaging material 25 in tubing form and slits and unfolds the tubing to form the flat web of the packaging material for subsequent calendering and forming around a fed product.

The calendering means may include any means which is suitable for tensioning the flat web to supply the forming means. In a preferred embodiment, the calendering means comprises a pair of spring clamped rollers which are adapted to ensure that the flat web is fed 30 to the forming means at a consistent tension and angle. This calendering allows the apparatus

to be started and stopped during operation without the feed tension changing.

The forming means may comprise any suitable means for forming the flat web into a tubular shape around the fed product as will be understood by those skilled in the art. In a preferred embodiment, the forming means comprises a forming shoe which forms the flat 5 web around the fed product.

The sealing means for longitudinally sealing the packaging material formed around the product may include any suitable means for longitudinally sealing the packaging material to substantially reform the material into its original tubing form around the fed product. The longitudinal seal is typically formed by a combination of heat and pressure which cause the 10 two layers of material to weld or bond together. It is preferable that this joint is hermetic in nature. The heat and pressure are supplied typically by heated rollers with the film clamped therebetween. Variations of this include heated bands, drag wires, ultra sonic heating devices clamping the layers of plastic material and applying heat. An alternative method is to apply 15 a cold bonding adhesive agent to both faces which may then bond to each other when pressure is applied.

The end sealing means may comprise any suitable hot or cold sealing systems which employ adhesive and/or heat to facilitate sealing of the packaging material at one or both ends of the fed product. The configuration of the sealing means is selected to cut and seal the packaging material at one or both ends of the product and may be determined, as discussed 20 above, on the basis of whether subsequent vacuum sealing of the packaged product is desirable. That is, the end sealing means may be selected to provide a single seal adjacent a transverse cut in the packaging material or may be selected to provide a pair of seals which straddle a transverse cut in the packaging material. It will be recognised that the first of these options will produce an open bag containing the fed product. In a preferred embodiment, 25 the end sealing means comprises an impulse sealing device which includes at least two complimentary jaw members which clamp the packaging material to form a transverse cut in the packaging material, and which form a seal on one or both sides of the formed transverse cut.

As discussed above in relation to the method according to the invention, when the 30 apparatus is in use, the flat web formed by slitting and unfolding of the tubing of packaging

material will include some deviation in width. Therefore, in a preferred embodiment, the packaging apparatus preferably further comprises means for trimming excess packaging material from the flat web of packaging material to advantageously ensure that a longitudinal seal is formed along the length of the packaging material formed around the product which
5 is a neat fin seal.

The packaging apparatus also preferably further comprises means to facilitate center tracking of the tube to ensure that it is slit centrally along its length by the slitting and unfolding means.

In order to completely automate the packaging apparatus according to the invention,
10 it is preferred that the apparatus further comprise sensing means for auto-positioning of a product and successive products for end sealing. That is, preferably a sensing means is provided to sense when a product is in position for end sealing at which stage the conveyance of the product is stopped and an end seal formed or the sealing mechanism travels with the product forming a seal without halting the conveyance of the product. After completing the
15 transverse seal, the sealing mechanism travels in the reverse direction to prepare for the following seal. By controlling the spacing of the product with respect to each other, the package or bag length can be controlled. In a preferred embodiment, the sensing is generally completed by optical sensors which detect the leading and trailing edge of the products. This is the method used in determining spacing of respective products and the final position of the
20 transverse seal.

The invention will now be described in more detail with reference to the accompanying diagrams in which:

Diagram 1.1 illustrates a conventional form, fill and seal packaging apparatus;

Diagram 1.2 illustrates an embodiment of the form, fill and seal packaging apparatus
25 according to the invention;

Diagram 2.1 illustrates the slitting and unfolding of the fed tubing material by slitting one edge thereof;

Diagram 2.2 illustrates the slitting and unfolding of the tubing material by slitting centrally on one face thereof;

30 Diagram 3.1 illustrates the trimming of excess edge material;

Diagram 4.1 illustrates the configuration of the packaging apparatus of the invention; and

Diagram 5.1 illustrates the transverse sealing sequence used in accordance with embodiments of the invention.

5 Referring to Diagram 1.1, a conventional form, fill and seal packaging apparatus feeds a single wound material from a roll (B). The film is unwound from the roll (B) and fed into the apparatus by a passive or powered unwind mechanism. Calendering of the unwound film is conducted in a calendering zone (C) where the material is adapted to ensure that it is supplied to the feed area of the apparatus at a consistent tension and angle.

10 Product to be packaged (D) is fed by a conveyor belt under the web of material to a forming device (E), commonly referred to as a forming box or forming shoe. The forming device (E) wraps the flat web of material around the incoming product (D) so that the flat web of material forms a tubular shape around the product. The material, when wrapped around the incoming product (D) may be folded in a manner which facilitates the production of a
15 longitudinal seal. This may be achieved, for example, by forming a fin (F) or a lap in the material.

After wrapping of the flat web of material around the incoming product (D), a longitudinal seal is made in the material by a longitudinal sealing device (G) to seal the two edges of the wrapped material together to form a complete tube.

20 When the complete tube is formed around the product, an end sealing device (A) is used to seal the tube and cut the tube between successive products (D) to form a finished packaged product (H).

As discussed earlier, these conventional form, fill and seal packaging apparatuses are limited due to the limitations in the maximum possible widths of the flat sheets fed from the
25 roll (B).

The invention, however, as illustrated in Diagram 1.2, feeds a tubing material (J) from a roll (K) of packaging material in an integral tubing form. In this case, the apparatus is provided with a slitting and unfolding device (L) which makes a continuous cut in the tubing material (J) and folds or forms the cut tubing material into a flat sheet. The slitting and
30 unfolding device uses a set of geometric plates and frames to ensure the alignment of the

material does not vary in the process.

As will be seen in Diagram 1.2, the following calendering of the slit and unfolded material is achieved by a pair of sprung clamped rollers in a calendering zone (C). The remaining packaging of the product (D) by a forming device (E), longitudinal sealing device 5 (G) and end sealing device (A) may be conducted in line with conventional methods.

Referring to Diagrams 2.1 and 2.2, the slitting and unfolding device generally comprises a back unfolding plate (1.1) and a front unfolding plate (1.2).

In Diagram 2.1, the tubing material is slit along one edge thereof by the slitting and unfolding device. In this regard, the raw tubing material (A) is fed into the device and slit 10 at an edge slitting point (B). Following slitting of the tubing material, the back layer (C) of the film folds to travel 90° from the original infeed path, and the front layer (D) of the film travels in a direct path. The back layer of the film travelling at 90° from the original infed path (E) travels between the front unfolding plate (1.2) and the back unfolding plate (1.1) until it is folded to travel at 180° (F) from the original infed path. Following this operation, 15 a final single web of film (G) exits the slitting and unfolding device at 180° from the original infed path of the tubing material.

It should be noted that the angle (H) of the back and front unfolding plates (1.1, 1.2) are identical angles between 30° and 60°.

The slitting and unfolding device illustrated in diagram 2.2 utilizes the central slitting 20 of the tubing material (A).

In this case, a central slitting point (B) is provided on the back face of the tubing material (A). The back layer of the slit film (C) is then folded to travel at 90° from the original infeed path. The front layer (D) of the film travels in a direct path. As was the case in Diagram 2.1, the back layer of film travelling at 90° from the original infeed path (E) 25 passes between the front unfolding plate (1.2) and the back unfolding plate (1.1). The back layer of the film is then folded to travel at 180° (F) from the original infeed path. The final single web of film (G) exits the slitting and unfolding device at 180° from the original infeed path of the tubing (A).

As was the case in Diagram 2.1, the angles (H) provided by the plates are identical 30 angles between 30° and 60°.

Referring to Diagram 3.1, excess material (E) is advantageously trimmed from the packaging material at a point (C), and a longitudinal seal (D) applied to the trimmed material to complete the tube. This procedure advantageously removes inconsistent edges (B) of the packaging material generally present due to inconsistencies and variations during the manufacture of the tubing material.

A further illustration of the packaging apparatus according to the invention is provided in Diagram 4.1. As illustrated in this diagram, the tubing material is unwound from a roll (B) and slit and unfolded using a slitting and unfolding device (C). The slit and unfolded material is then fed as a single web to a tensioning and feeding calender (D) and then onto 10 a forming or folding box (E). After forming or folding of the single web material by the forming or folding box (E) product (A) is fed into the formed material and an edged trimming device (F) used to trim the edges of the material. Following this, a longitudinal sealing device (G) is used to seal the material to form a complete tube. Scrap or edge trim material is removed by a suitable waste removal device (H).

15 Sealing of the formed tubing material about the product (A) is conducted by means of a pair of transverse sealing jaws (J) which are mounted for complementary movement towards each other. These jaws may either form a pair of transverse seals and cut the tubing material between the pair of seals, or may seal only one side of the tubing material and cut the material adjacent the seal. In the first case, the product (A) is completely enclosed as the 20 final package (L), whereas in the second instance the product (A) is conveyed out of the apparatus in an open bag as the final package (L).

In any event, the product (A) is conveyed by means of a main transport conveyor belt (K), and the packaging of the product (A) controlled by a machine control panel (M).

As previously discussed, the apparatus preferably includes sensors (not shown) which 25 determine the position of the product (A) relative to the sealing jaws (J) so as to determine operation of the sealing jaws (J) to seal between subsequent products (A).

The transverse sealing sequence is better illustrated in Diagram 5.1. The sequence includes the lowering of the jaws (A, B) toward the material (C) until the jaws are in a closed position. In this position, sealing means (D) on each jaw (A, B) form a pair of longitudinal 30 seals in the material (C). Simultaneously, a blade (E) forms a cut in the material between the pair of seals formed by the sealing means (D). The sealing means (D) may include

- 10 -

conventional means such as thermal bands.

Throughout this specification and the claims which follow, unless the context requires otherwise, the word "comprise", and variations such as "comprises" and "comprising", will be understood to imply the inclusion of a stated integer or group of integers or steps but not 5 the exclusion of any other integer or group of integers or steps.

Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the invention described herein is susceptible to variations and modifications other than those specifically described. It is to be understood that the invention includes all such variations and modifications. The invention also includes all of the steps, features, compositions and compounds referred to or indicated 10 in this specification, individually or collectively, and any and all combinations of any two or more of said steps or features.

CLAIMS

1. A method for packaging comprising the steps of:

- (i) continuously feeding a packaging material as tubing from a supply;
- (ii) slitting and unfolding said tubing to form a flat web of said packaging material;
- (iii) forming said flat web of packaging material around a fed product and longitudinally sealing the packaging material formed around the product; and
- (iv) cutting and sealing the packaging material at one or both ends of the product.

10

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein in step (iv) the packaging material is cut and sealed at one end of the product and the packaged product is subsequently vacuum sealed.

15 3. A method according to claim 1, wherein the tubing has a double web width of up to about 550 mm.

4. A method according to claim 1, wherein during feeding the tubing is tracked to ensure that in step (ii) it is substantially centrally slit along its length.

20 5. A method according to claim 1, wherein prior to or during the longitudinal sealing of the packaging material in step (iii), the packaging material is trimmed along its slit edges formed in step (ii) to remove excess packaging material therefrom.

25 6. A method according to claim 1, wherein step (iv) is carried out by impulse sealing the packaging material at the end or ends of the product.

7. A packaging apparatus comprising:

means for receiving packaging material continuously fed as tubing from a supply, and slitting and unfolding the tubing to form a flat web of the packaging material;

30 calendering means for receiving the flat web and tensioning the flat web;

- 12 -

forming means for receiving the tensioned flat web and forming the flat web around a fed product;

sealing means for longitudinally sealing the packaging material formed around the product; and

5 end sealing means for cutting and sealing the packaging material at one or both ends of the product.

8. A packaging apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the calendering means comprises a pair of spaced rollers which are adapted to ensure that the flat web is fed to the forming means
10 at a consistent tension and angle.

9. A packaging apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the forming means comprises a forming shoe which forms the flat web into a tubular shape around the fed product.

15 10. A packaging apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the end sealing means comprising a hot or cold sealing system.

11. A packaging apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the end sealing means comprises an impulse sealing device which includes at least two complimentary jaw members which clamp
20 the packaging material to form a transverse cut in the packaging material, and which form a seal on one or both sides of the formed transverse cut.

12. A packaging apparatus according to claim 7, further comprising means for trimming excess packaging material from the flat web of packaging material.

25

13. A packaging apparatus according to claim 7, further comprising means to facilitate centre tracking of the tubing to ensure that it is slit centrally along its length by the slitting and unfolding means.

30

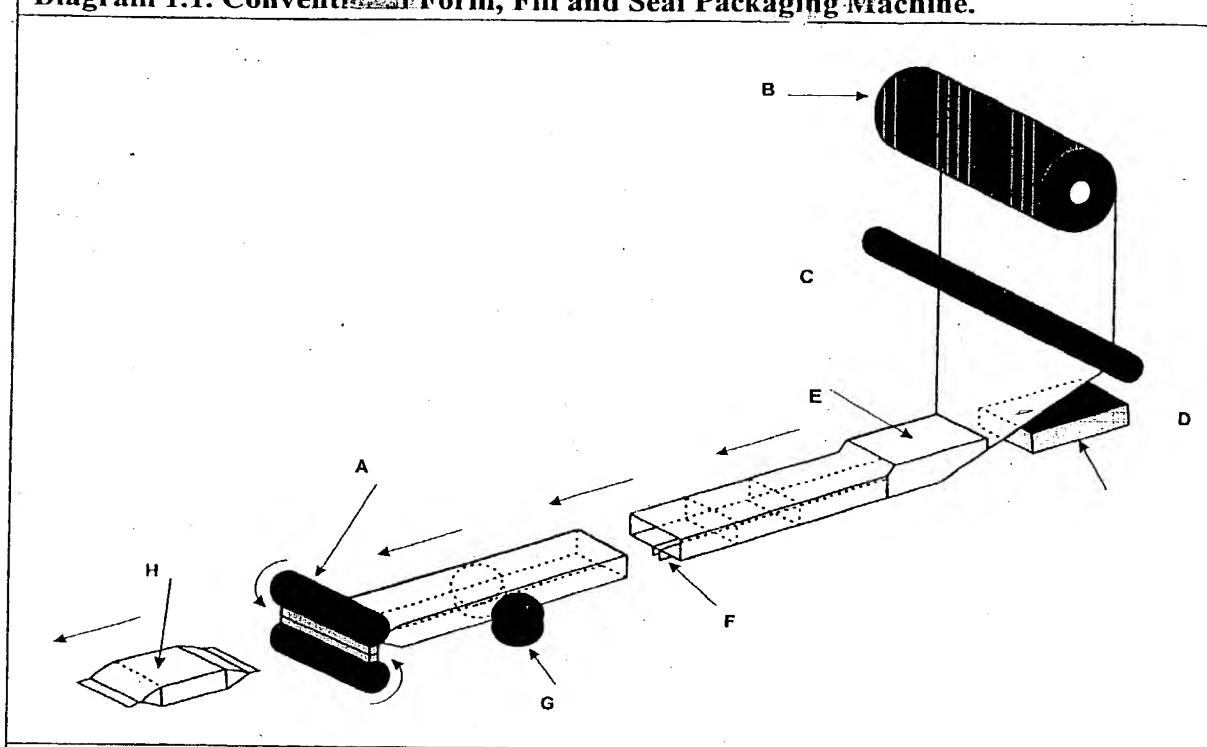
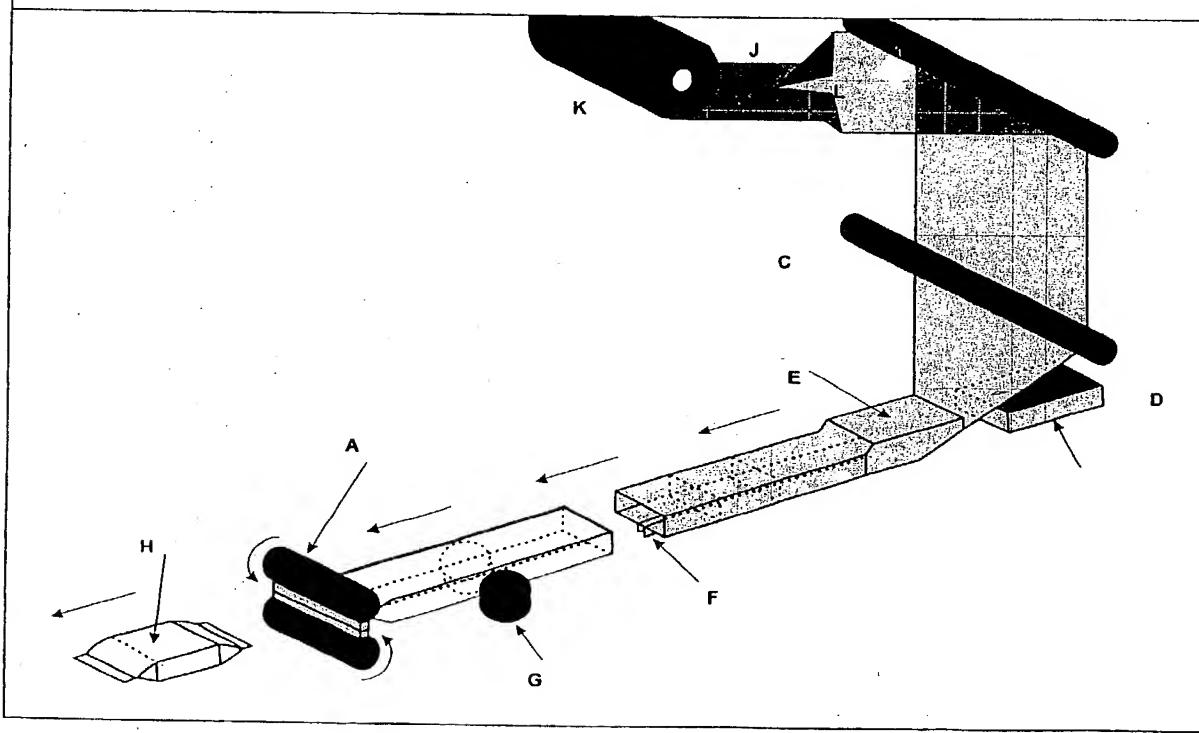
- 13 -

14. A packaging apparatus according to claim 13, wherein the means to facilitate centre tracking of the tubing includes one or more sensors.
15. A packaging apparatus according to claim 7, further comprising sensing means for auto-positioning of a product for end sealing.

ABSTRACT

A method for packaging comprising the steps of:

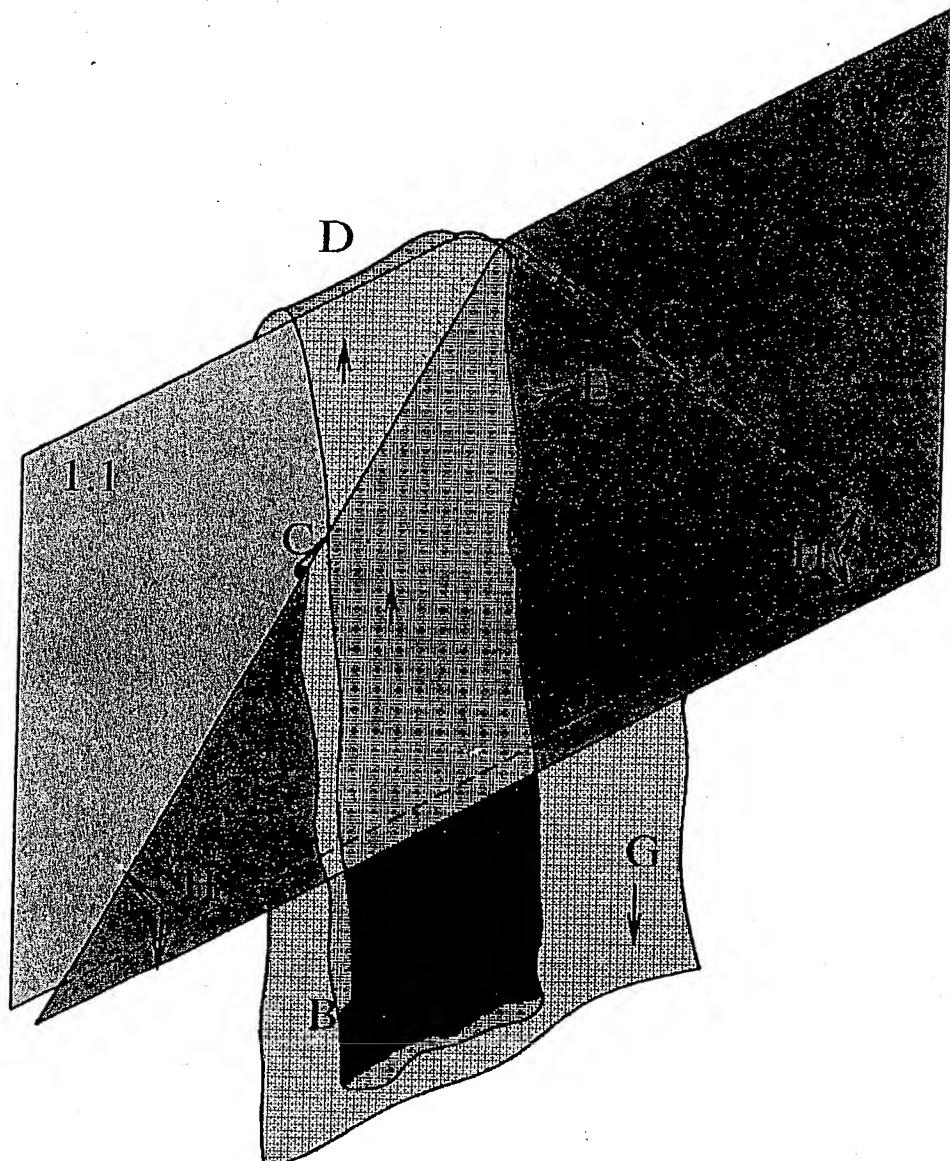
- (i) continuously feeding a packaging material as tubing from a supply;
- 5 (ii) slitting and unfolding said tubing to form a flat web of said packaging material;
- (iii) forming said flat web of packaging material around a fed product and longitudinally sealing the packaging material formed around the product; and
- 10 (iv) cutting and sealing the packaging material at one or both ends of the product.

Diagram 1.1. Conventional Form, Fill and Seal Packaging Machine.**Diagram 1.2. Described device using Tubing material feeding a Form Fill and Seal Packaging Machine.**

10/070771

2 / 6

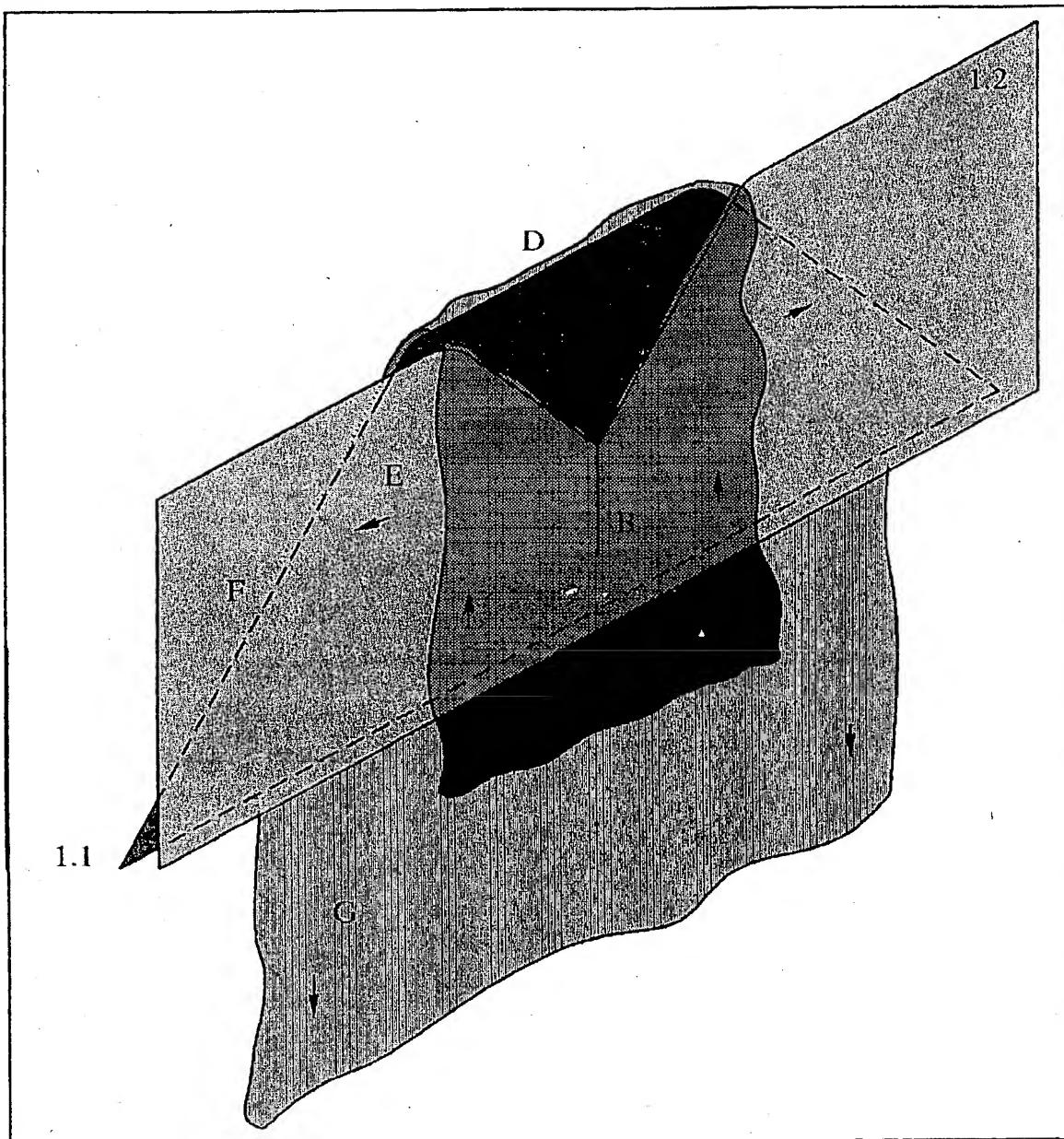
Diagram 2.1 – Slitting and unfolding tubing material by slitting one edge.



10/070771

3/6

Diagram 2.2 – Slitting and unfolding tubing material by slitting centrally on one face.



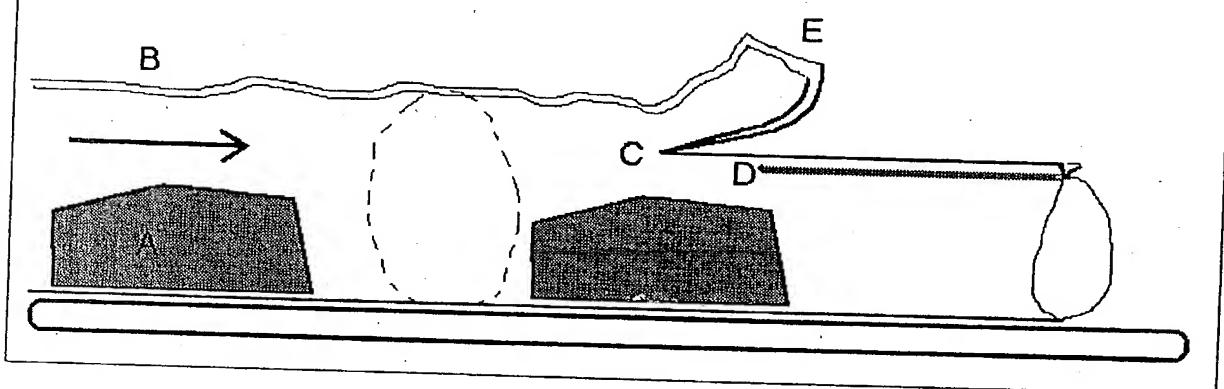
CL CL

10/070771

4 / 6

Diagram 3.1. Trimming excess edge material.

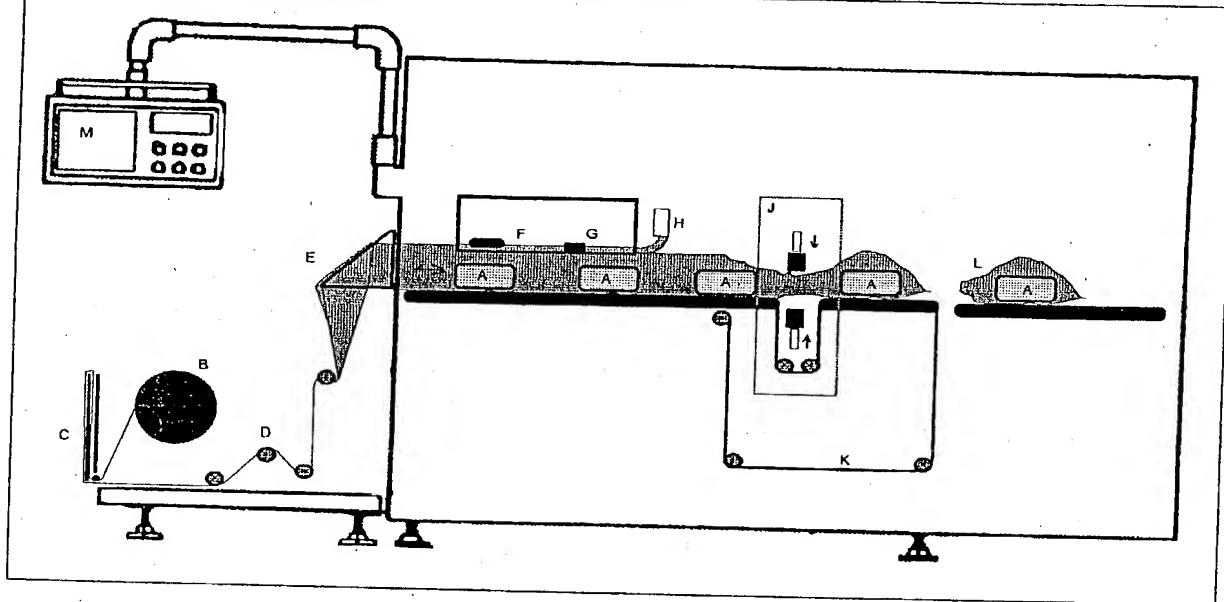
**Diagram 3.1. Trimming excess
edge material.**



10/070771

5/6

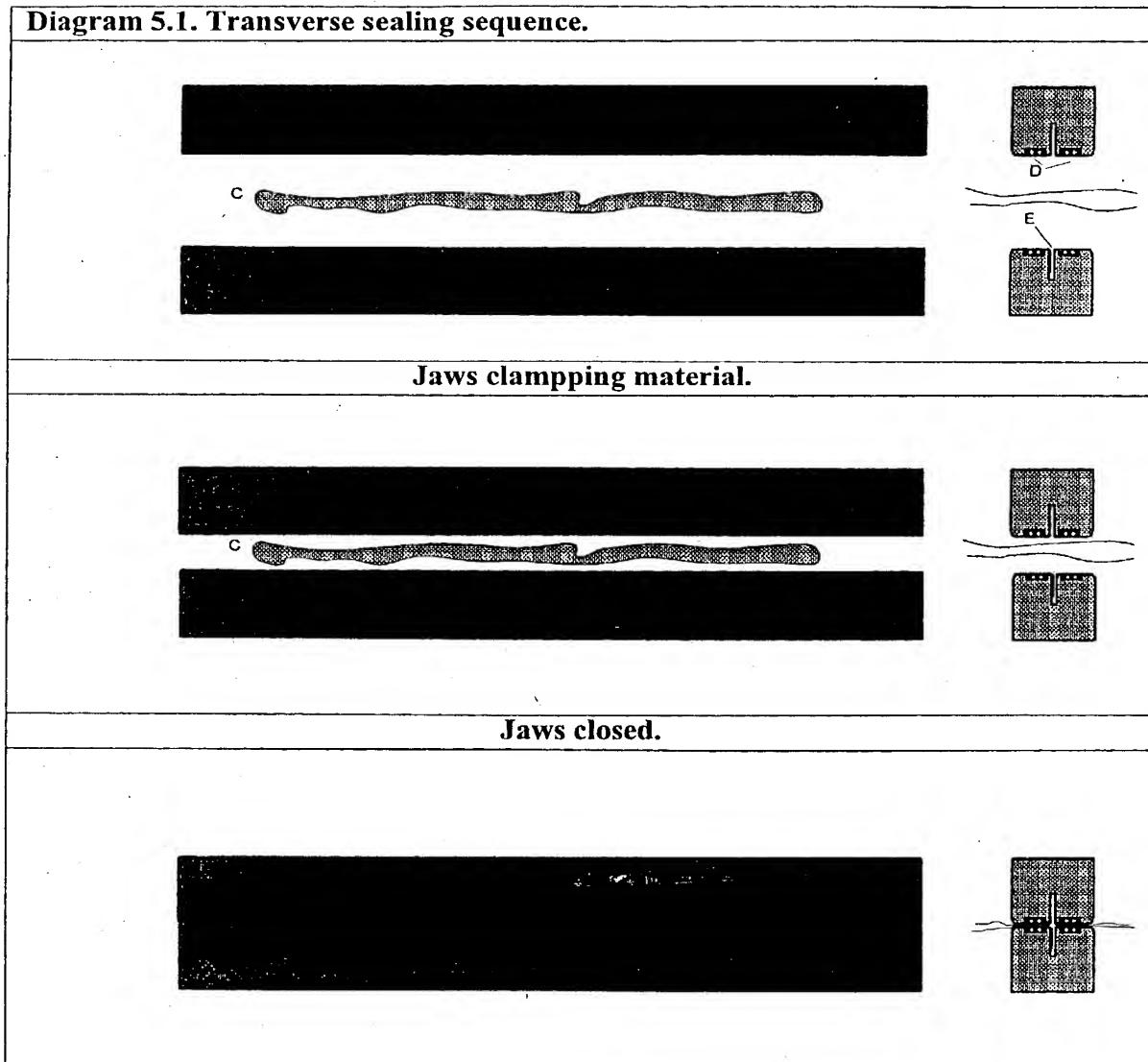
Diagram 4.1. Packaging machine configuration..



10/070771

6 / 6

Diagram 5.1. Transverse sealing sequence.



Full Coverage
More Health News

washingtonpost

Home

News

On Politics

Entertainment

Live Online

Camera Works

Marketplace

Jobs

Personalize Your Post | Go to mywashington

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS CORRESPONDENCE IS BEING
 DEPOSITED WITH THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE AS
 FIRST CLASS MAIL, POSTAGE PREPAID, IN AN ENVELOPE
 ADDRESSED TO: ATTENTION: BOX MISSING PARTS,
 COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20231, ON
 THE DATE NOTED BELOW MY SIGNATURE

Margaret B. White

Margaret B. White

10-18-02

DATE

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicants: David J. Stevens
 Serial No.: 10,070,771
 Filing Date: 09-07-00
 Title: METHOD FOR PACKAGING AND PACKAGING APPARATUS

Docket No.: D-43368-01

COMBINED DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY

Sir:

As the above-identified inventor, I hereby declare that:

- 1) My residence and post office address and citizenship are given below.
- 2) I believe that I am the first, original, and sole inventor of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought for the above-entitled invention, the specification of which was filed on September 7, 1999, as PCT International Application Number PCT/AU00/01062.
- 3) I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims and any drawings attached thereto.
- 4) I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations 1.56(a).
- 5) Pursuant to 35 U.S.C. 119, I hereby claim foreign priority benefits based upon the below-identified foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate:

Country: N/A
 Serial No.: N/A

- 6) Any corresponding foreign counterpart applications for patent or inventor's certificate which were filed prior to the above-identified priority application are listed below:

Country: N/A
Serial No.: N/A
Filed: N/A

- 7) I hereby appoint the following attorneys who may be reached at the below-identified address and telephone numbers, to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected herewith: John J. Wasatonic, Registration No. 29,984, Mark B. Quatt, Registration No. 30,484; Rupert B. Hurley Jr., Registration No. 29,313, Thomas C. Lagaly, Registration No. 34,652 and Daniel B. Ruble, Registration No. 40,794.

5
Direct all correspondence and telephone calls to Mark B. Quatt at:

Address: Cryovac, Inc.
P.O. Box 464
Duncan, SC 29334
Telephone: (864) 433-2817

- 8) All statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issuing thereon.

FULL NAME OF INVENTOR:

David J. Stevens

INVENTOR'S SIGNATURE:



DATE OF EXECUTION:

9TH OCTOBER 2002

CITIZENSHIP:

AUSTRALIAN

RESIDENCE ADDRESS:

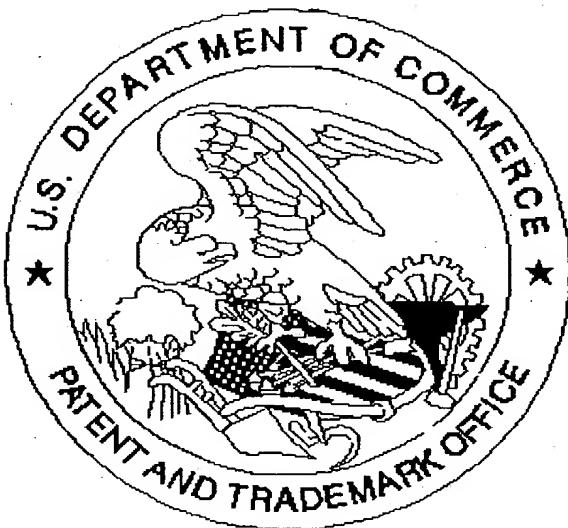
Danks Street ALBERT PARK AUSTRALIA

POST OFFICE ADDRESS:

P.O. Box 736 P' MELBOURNE
AUSTRALIA 3207



United States Patent & Trademark Office
Office of Initial Patent Examination -- Scanning Division



Application deficiencies found during scanning:

Page(s) _____ of _____ were not present
for scanning. (Document title)

Page(s) _____ of _____ were not
present
for scanning. (Document title)

Scanned copy is best available. Some figures are dark.